



**Seirbhís Tacaíochta
Oideachais Tusla**

Tusla Education Support Service

**School Attendance Data
Primary and Post-Primary Schools
And
Student Absence Reports
Primary and Post-Primary Schools**

2023-2024

February 2025

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1 Introduction

This report is the 17th publication of school attendance data in state-aided schools for the 2023–24 school year. The data covers 21 years with the first publication in 2003. In line with the Education (Welfare) Act of 2000, all primary schools, including special schools, and post-primary schools must report annually on student non-attendance in primary and post-primary schools at an aggregated level. This data is collected using the Tusla Portal hosted by the Child and Family Agency to generate two reports.

The data is presented first from the Annual Attendance Report (AAR), which provides four pieces of data.

- total days lost by all students
- total students absent for 20 or more days
- total students suspended
- total students expelled at the school level.

The second, the Student Absence Reports (SAR), first published in the 2017-18 academic year, are submitted by a school as a pupil-level report. These reports provide data on those students aged over six and under 16 absent for a cumulative total of 20 or more days by the reasons for their absence. The reason for absence may be one of:

- Illness
- Urgent
- Holiday
- Suspension
- Other

These categories make up the explained absences, and the left-over of absences not covered under these categories make up the unexplained category absences.

This report is presented in three sections. Section 1 provides an introduction and executive summary of the main findings for primary and post-primary schools. Section 2 shows the results of the AAR, while section 3 shows the results of the SAR.

1.1 Executive Summary

Figures for total days lost and 20-plus days lost remain elevated well above their long running average despite both falling for the second consecutive year since their peak in 2021-22. This is

true at primary and post primary levels. Suspensions increased at primary level and decreased at post-primary level, and expulsions increased at both levels. Both suspensions and expulsions have returned to their pre-pandemic levels and have stabilised there, having been diminished due to school closures and high rates of absences during the pandemic years of 2019-20 to 2022-23.

1.1.1 Response

This report covers the academic year 2023-24. The previous report was the first report since schools returned to a full, standardised schedule at the beginning of the 2022-23 academic year. The previous years (2019-20 to 2021-22 incl.) saw heavy interruption to school attendance due to frequent school closures and absence in accordance with public health advice. This resulted in the response rates plummeting to historic lows of 63.5% and 45.8% in 2020-21 for primary and post-primary respectively. In the years 2021-22 and 2022-23 this level increased to 77.5% and 71.4% respectively.

This year saw a significant increase in the response rate from post-primary schools up to 74.9% while the primary response rate decreased slightly to 76.3%. Both response rates remain significantly below their pre-pandemic levels although both have rebounded significantly from their historic lows. In 2016-17 for example, the response rate for both was over 99%.

The number and percentage of schools responding to the AAR for the years 2018-19 through 2023-24 is tabulated below (Table 1.2). The number of students covered by responding schools is presented in Table 2.1. SAR submission rates (Table 3.1) for both primary and post-primary schools remain well above the response rate for AAR.

Table 1.1 Response rates from primary and post-primary schools for Annual Attendance Reports, 2018–23

School Level		2018–19		2019–20		2020–21		2021–22		2022–23		2023–24	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Primary	Total Schools	3,230		3,230		3,231		3,230		3,221		3,215	
	- responded	2,892	89.5	2,079	64.4	2,053	63.5	2,502	77.5	2,512	78.0	2,453	76.3
Post-primary	Total Schools	717		723		730		728		727		722	
	- responded	596	83.1	436	60.3	334	45.8	471	64.7	519	71.4	541	74.9

1.1.2 School Days Lost

School days lost is the total number of absences summed over the student population. Total school days are calculated by multiplying the total student population in responding schools by the total days in the school year. School days lost are then represented as a percentage of the total school days.

The recovery of lost days from the pandemic highs has continued at primary level, while at post-primary level the number of days lost has risen for the second consecutive year. There is still a significant bridge to gap between current levels and pre-pandemic levels.

In 2023-24 a total of 6.247 million days (8%) were lost out of a possible 78.4 million at primary level. This is a decrease of about 0.6 million from the previous year when 8.6% of total school days were lost. At post primary level 6.03 million days (11.3%) were lost out of a possible 53.3 million. This is an increase of around 0.44 million, but this is largely accounted for by the increase in the total student population by roughly 24,000 students. The percentage of days lost at post-primary level remained the same as in 2022-23. The days lost at primary level is 1.6 points above the long run average (2003-2023) of 6.41%. At post-primary level, the percentage of days lost is 2.86 points above the long run average of 8.45%. Both figures remain well above the pre-pandemic averages of 5.95% and 7.8% for primary and post primary respectively.

1.1.3 Students 20-plus Days Absences

20-plus days absent counts continue to fall at primary level and have increased once again at post-primary level. Both remain significantly elevated compared to their long-term averages. In 2023-24 there were 94,501 students who lost 20-plus days at primary level, representing 22.1% of the student population. This is down from 110,151 (25.1%) in 2022-23. At post-primary level 67,612 students lost 20 or more days, representing 21.2% of the student population. This is an increase from 65,883 in 2022-23, but a decrease in percentage terms from 22.3%. The percentage of students absent for 20 days or more at primary level is 8.41 points above the long run average (2003-2023) of 13.64%. At post-primary level, the percentage of students absent for 20-days or more is 4.48 points above the long run average of 16.7%. Both figures remain well above the pre-pandemic averages of 11.43% and 16.19% for primary and post-primary respectively.

1.1.4 Students Suspended

At primary level, 1,265 (0.3%) students were suspended in 2023-24, up from 1,135 (0.26%) in 2022-23. These figures are in excess of the long run average of 1181 (0.24%). At post-primary level 11,627 (3.6%) students were suspended, down from 11,908 (4%) last year. These figures are below the long run average of 12,535 (4.06%).

The 16-year average is used as a baseline as suspensions were only first reported in 2004–05, and the three years of pandemic-disrupted years, from 2019–20 to 2021–22 were excluded. Suspensions were suppressed during the pandemic-disrupted years due to school closures and

high rates of absences. The low response rates (76.3% and 76.7%) this year may obscure the true level of suspensions nationwide.

1.1.5 Students Expelled

At primary level, expulsions rose from 10 (0.002%) in 2022-23 to 27 (0.006%). These figures are in excess of the long run average (2003-2023) of 18 (0.003%) expulsions per year. At post-primary level expulsions increased from 134 to 150 while the percentage figures saw a slight decrease from 0.05% to 0.047%. These figures are above the long run average of 132 (0.0043%). These long run averages cover the same timeframe as outlined above for suspensions.

1.1.6 DEIS Schools

At primary level, total days lost as a percentage remains above that of non-DEIS schools in both urban and rural categories, although this gap has grown smaller in consecutive years. The percentage of students absent for 20-plus days shows the same trend, with the figures for DEIS schools across categories showing a slower progression back to pre-pandemic levels than their non-DEIS counterparts.

As with last year, DEIS schools in the Urban Band 1 (UB1) category show the highest percentage of totals days lost at 11%, a decrease from 11.9% last year. DEIS Urban Band 2 (UB2) primary schools lost 9.2% of school days (down from 10.5%) while DEIS Rural schools lost 7.6% (down from 8.9%). Both Urban bands are above the national primary average of 8%.

Total days lost for all three DEIS types remain above their long run averages (2006-2023); UB1 is 1.84 points higher, UB2 is 1.3 points higher, and Rural schools are 1.47 points higher. The average for all primary DEIS schools was 8.91%, which is 1.51 points higher than the long run average and 2.88 points higher than the long run non-DEIS schools' average.

Primary urban band DEIS schools also had higher proportions of students losing 20 days or more. UB1 schools had 38% (down from 42.9%) of students absent for 20 days or more, while UB2 had 34% (up from 33.5%). In comparison, non-DEIS urban schools had 23.7% (down from 25.9%). In rural schools, the downward trend continued. Rural DEIS schools had 20.2% of students absent for 20 or more days (down from 28.2%), and non-DEIS schools had 7% (down from 7.4%).

At post-primary level, the percentage of days lost in DEIS schools amounted to 14.1%, up slightly from 13.9% in 2022-23. Non-DEIS schools saw 10.3% of days lost, down slightly from 10.5%. The percentage of students missing 20 plus days was 28.3% (down from 30.7%) for DEIS schools and for non-DEIS this figure was 18.6% (down from 19.5%).

1.1.7 Student Absence Reports

The 2023-24 SAR data shows that there were 84,106 students missing 20-plus days in primary schools, or 16.4% of students. This is a decrease from 97,441 (19.2%) in 2022-23 and is 6.24 points above the 5-year average (excluding the 2021-22 year). At post-primary level, there were 50,627 students with 20-plus days absent, an increase from 49,238. The percentage of students with 20-plus days absent decreased from 13.9% to 13.3% 4.92 points above the 5-year average.

The SAR report has six categories of absences: illness, urgent, holiday, suspended, other, and unexplained. In 2023–24, the category of illness accounted for the highest number of absences in primary schools for the third consecutive year, representing 39.9% of days lost. In post-primary schools, “unexplained” absences accounted for the largest share of absences at 52.7%, also for the third consecutive year.

2 School Non-Attendance

2.1 Response

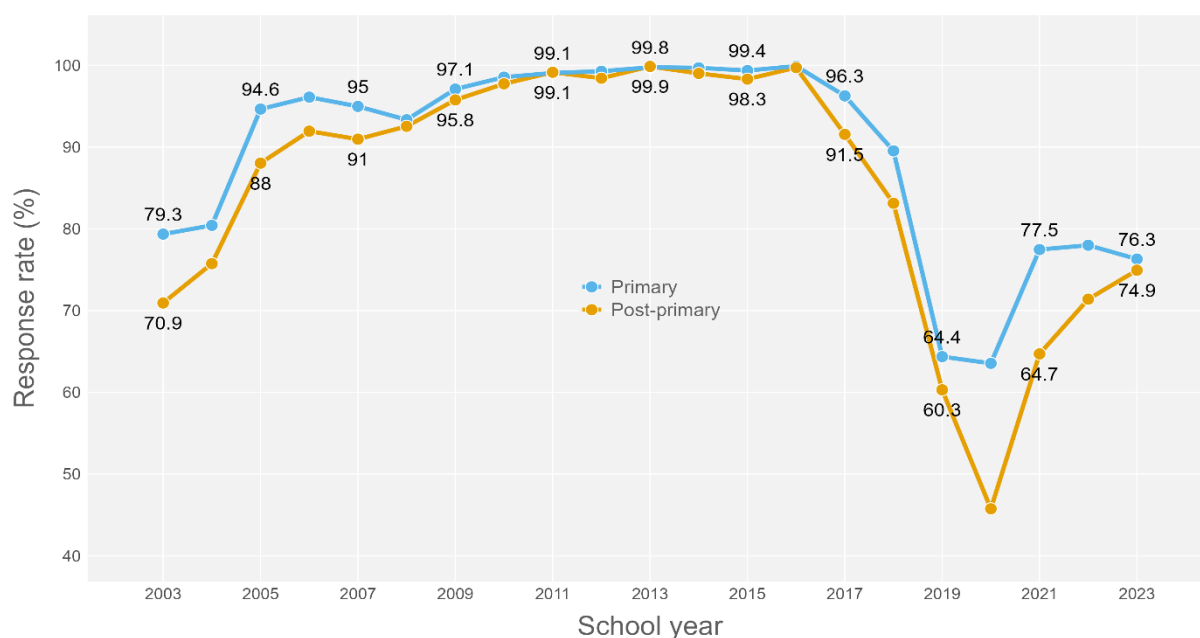
The response rates of non-attendance from state-aided schools and their enrolled students for the last five years are shown in Table 2.1. The response rate at primary level has decreased slightly to 76.3% from 78% last year. At post-primary level there was a significant increase in the response rate from 71.4% last year to 74.9%. The response rates cover 76.9% and 76.6% of the student populations at primary and post-primary levels respectively. The response rates have yet to reach pre-pandemic levels where response rates consistently surpassed 95% at both levels.

The absentee totals may be underreported due to the low response rates. 762 primary schools and 181 post primary schools did not provide any response. Despite this, the aggregated responses from responding schools should be enough to provide an accurate overview of absenteeism in state aided schools.

Table 2.1 Response rates from primary and post-primary schools for Annual Attendance Reports, 2019–23

School level		2019–20		2020–21		2021–22		2022–23		2023–24	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Primary	Total schools	3,230		3,231		3,230		3,221		3,215	
	- Responded	2,079	64.4	2,053	63.5	2,502	77.5	2,512	78.0	2,453	76.3
	Total students	567,430		561,101		554,464		557,823		556,983	
	- Responded	383,766	67.6	359,629	64.1	429,084	77.4	438,740	78.7	428,491	76.9
Post-primary	Total schools	723		730		728		727		722	
	- Responded	436	60.3	334	45.8	471	64.7	519	71.4	541	74.9
	Total students	371,450		379,184		391,698		406,392		416,620	
	- Responded	220,798	59.4	180,836	47.7	257,663	65.8	295,005	72.6	319,215	76.6

Figure 2.1 Response rates from primary and post-primary schools for Annual Attendance Reports, 2003–23



2.2 Summary Result

Schools report four measures in the AAR

1. Total number of non-attendance or days lost in a school year
2. Total number of students losing 20 days or more
3. Total number of students receiving suspensions
4. Total number of students expelled for whom all appeal processes have been exhausted.

The reported figures from primary and post-primary schools are tabulated below (Table 2.2) for the last three years. The summary results are reported on a national level of the total represented

student population, with percentages reflecting total national measures recorded based on data collected from individual schools.

Table 2.2 Summary of non-attendance measures for primary and post-primary schools, 2021–23

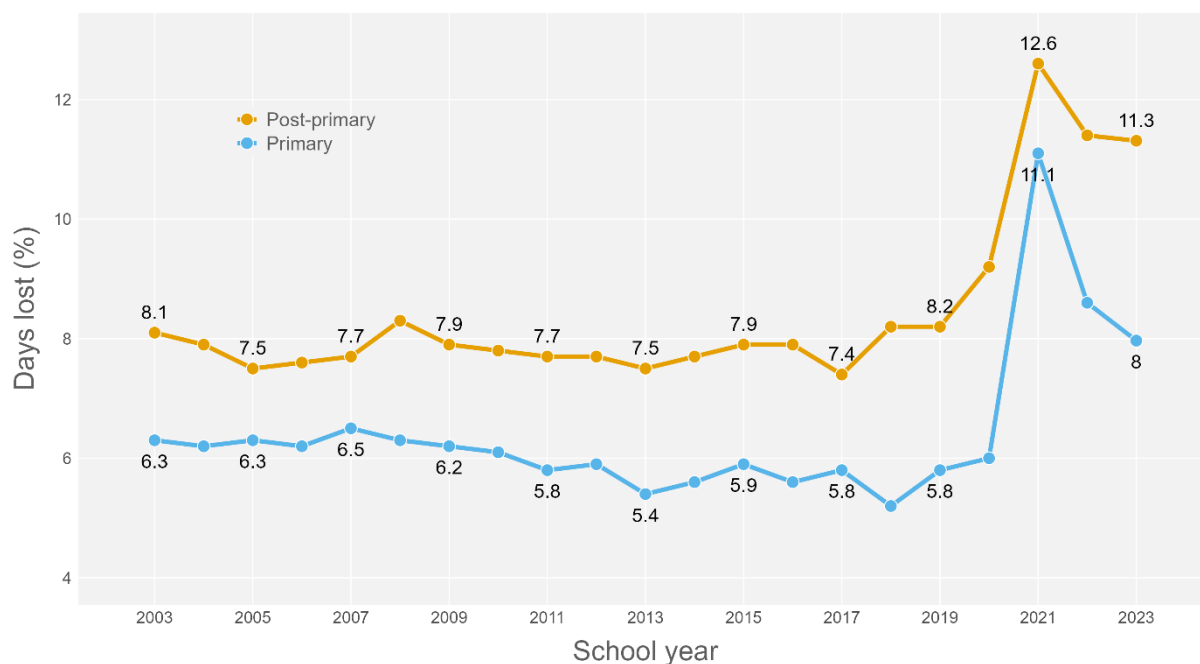
School level		2021–22		2022–23		2023–24	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Primary	Total Students in responding schools	429,084		438,740		428,491	
	Total school days in a full school year	182		182		182	
	- Total school days of students	78,093,288		79,850,680		78,413,853	
	- Total days lost	8,689,829	11.1	6,866,145	8.6	6,247,325	8.0
	Students who lost 20-plus days	173,072	40.3	110,151	25.1	94,501	22.1
	Students suspended	979	0.23	1,135	0.26	1,265	0.30
	Students expelled	7	0.002	10	0.002	27	0.006
Post-primary	Total Students in school that responded	257,663		295,005		319,215	
	Total school days in a full school year	166		166		166	
	- Total school days of students	42,772,058		48,970,830		53,308,905	
	- Total days lost	5,378,078	12.6	5,569,447	11.4	6,029,243	11.3
	Students who lost 20-plus days	69,097	26.8	65,883	22.3	67,612	21.2
	Students suspended	8,658	3.4	11,908	4.0	11,627	3.6
	Students expelled	85	0.0	134	0.0	150	0.0

2.2.1 Days Lost

The days lost percentage metric is calculated by summing the total days lost dividing it by the total number of school days. The total number of school days is the number of students multiplied by the total number of school days in an academic year.

The days lost percentage remains high for both primary and post-primary schools relative to pre-pandemic levels. The pandemic years of 2019-20 and 2020-21 saw a reduced number of school days based on public health advice. 2021-22 saw a return to standard schedules for schools and resulted in a large increase in total days lost, particularly in the winter of 2021-22 when there was a large spike in COVID-19 cases (Figure 4.1).

Figure 2.2 Percentage of days lost for primary and post-primary schools, 2003–23

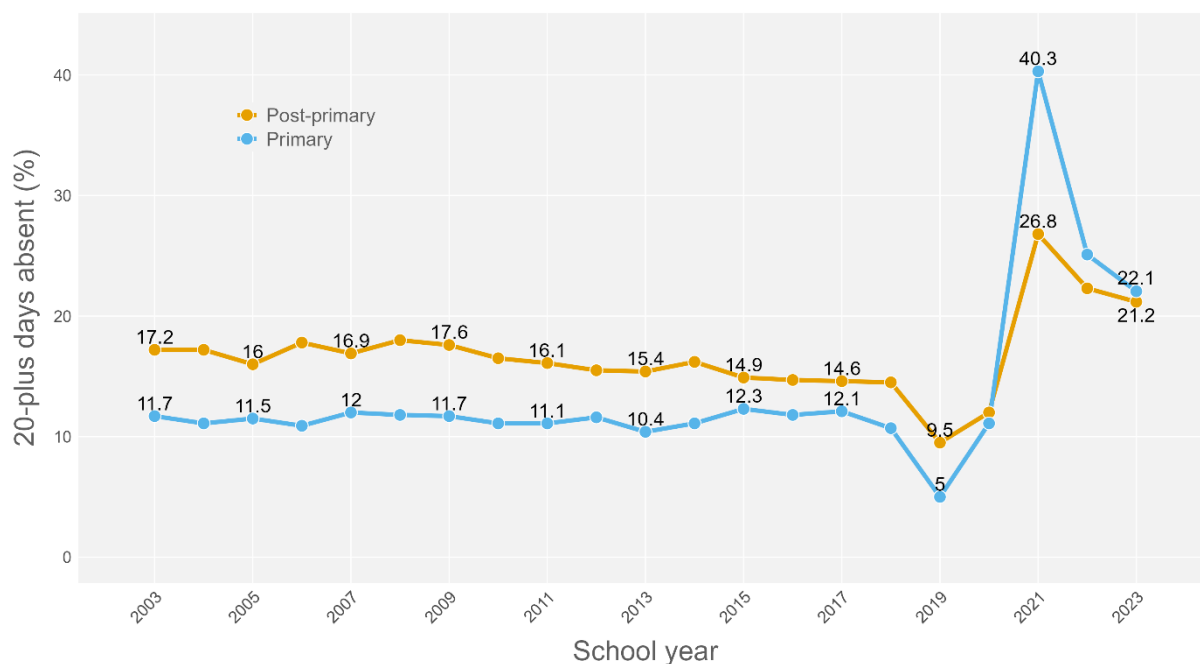


The days lost percentage decreased to 8% for primary schools and remained at 11.3% for post-primary schools. Days lost at primary level are 1.95 points above their 20-year average (6.05%) and at post-primary level they are 2.68 points above their 20-year average (8.62%).

2.2.2 20-Plus, Day Absences

Schools also submit the number of students absent for 20 days or more (Table 2.2). The numbers are presented as a percentage of the total student population. The pre-pandemic average, covering the years 2003-20 was 11% and 15.6% at primary and post-primary level respectively. The current reported figures of 22.1% and 21.2% for primary and post-primary schools follow a second year of decreases from the 2021-22 highs but are still well above the pre-pandemic levels. The rate of decrease seen this year is smaller than the previous years, as was seen in total days lost. The figure for primary schools decreased by only 3% from last year, while the percentage decreased only 1.1% for post-primary schools.

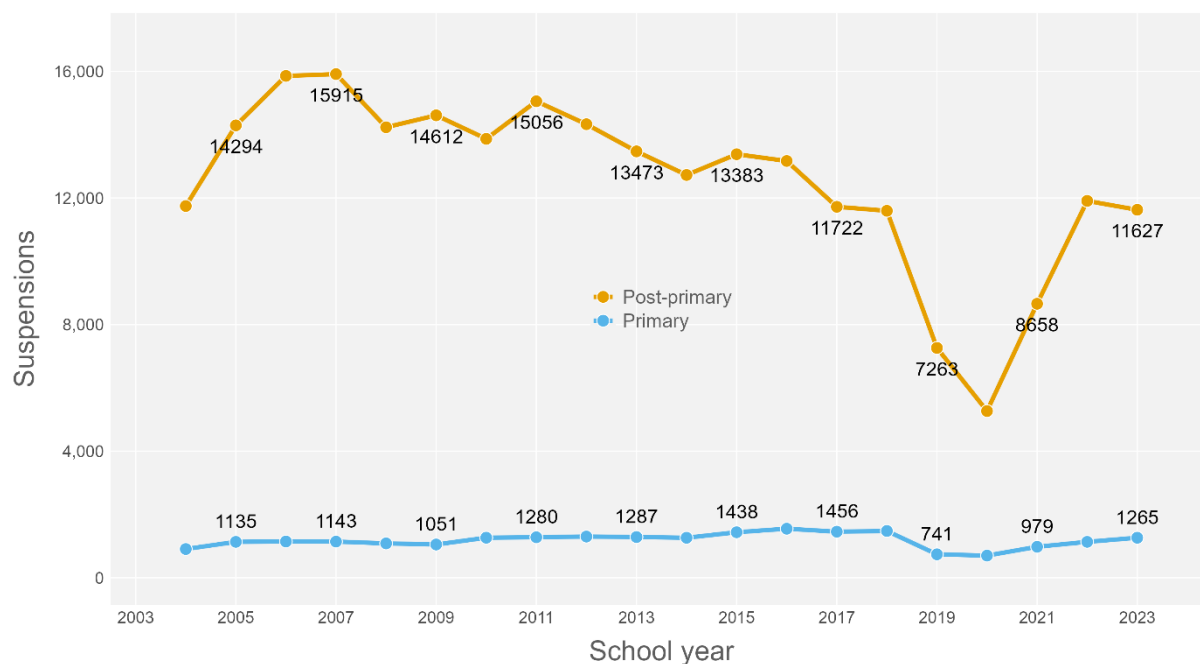
Figure 2.3 Percentage of 20-plus days absent for primary and post-primary schools, 2003–23



2.2.3 Suspensions

The rate of suspensions has stabilised in 2023-24. The reduction of school days and high rate of absenteeism in the pandemic years (2019-20 to 2020-21) had suppressed the occurrence of suspensions at both primary and post-primary levels. The return of suspensions to their expected values continued at primary level, with 1,265 suspensions in 2023-24. This was an increase from 1,135 in 2022-23. The number of suspensions at post-primary level decreased from 11,908 to 11,627. However, suspensions in primary schools, similar to expulsions, should be read with caution when comparing yearly trends. Percentage rates and absolute averages are sensitive to small adjustments of relatively rare suspensions compared to large population sizes, where primary school enrolment populations are rising and underreporting is occurring. Low response rates mean that the true totals may be underreported at both levels.

Figure 2.4 Number of student suspensions for primary and post-primary schools, 2004–23

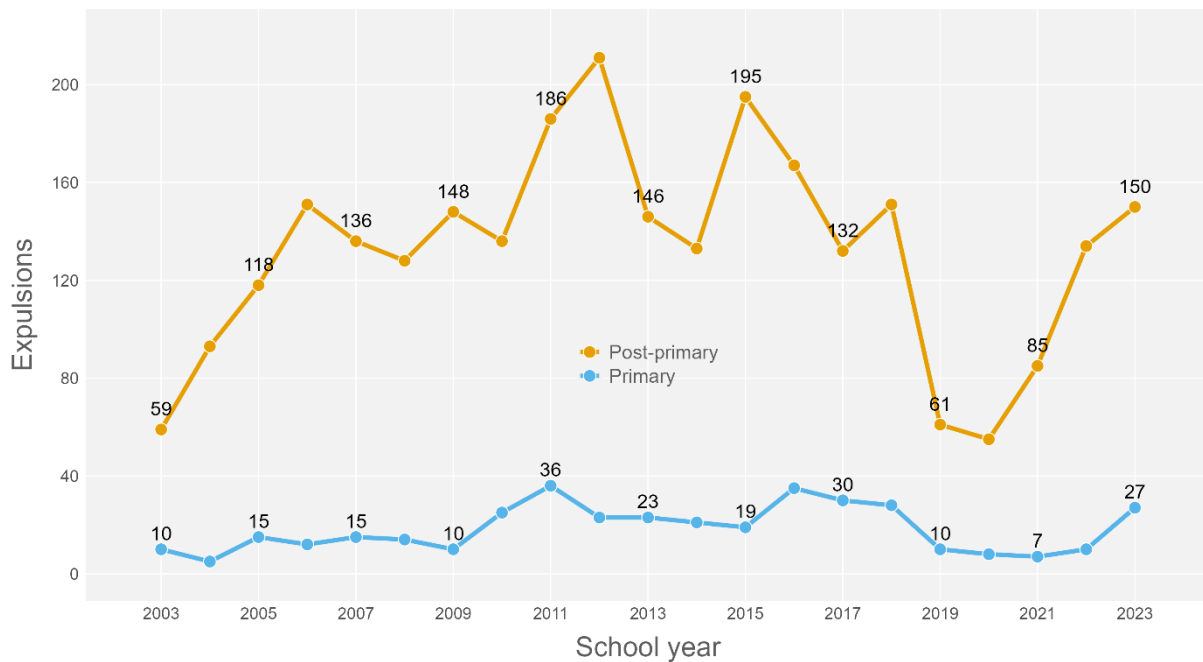


The percentage of students suspended at primary level increased to 0.3% from 0.26% and sits 0.05 points above the long run average since 2006. At post-primary level this figure decreased to 3.6% (from 4%), 0.62 points below the long run average.

2.2.4 Expulsions

The number of expulsions increased for the second consecutive year at both primary and post-primary level. Like suspensions, expulsions have continued to renorm to the pre-pandemic levels. Expulsions amongst primary students more than doubled from last year's figure of 10 (0.002%) to 27 (0.006%) in 2023-24. At post-primary level expulsions increased to 150 (0.047%) from 134 (0.045%). As with suspensions, the true total of expulsions may be underreported due to low response rates. Expulsions are above the long run averages of 19 (0.004%) at primary level and of 141 (0.047%) at post-primary level.

Figure 2.5 Number of student expulsions for primary and post-primary schools, 2003–23



2.3 Primary Schools

The following section examines figures amongst three primary-level subcategories: school type, DEIS status, and county. Percentage figures presented in this section are calculated from the average population of a school in each individual subcategory, as opposed to the total population figures presented in section 2.2.

2.3.1 School Type

The Irish education system has three main primary school types: mainstream, mainstream with special classes, and special school. The percentages of total days lost and students losing 20 or more days continued to decrease across all three types. Students enrolled in Special Education Schools continue to have the most days lost at 14.1% and students losing 20 or more days at 41.8%. Mainstream schools with special classes remain the second highest in both these measures, with figures of 8.4% and 25.4% respectively, as opposed to mainstream schools with 7.4% and 18.7% respectively. The figures for all three school types for the years 2021-22 to 2023-24 are tabulated below (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Summary of non-attendance measures for primary schools by school types, 2021–23

School Type		2021–22		2022–23		2023–24	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Mainstream	Total schools	2,579		2,245		2,071	
	- Responded	2,012	78.0	1,782	79.4	1,612	77.8
	Total students in responding schools	305,100	76.9	256,510	79.3	220,613	77.5
	- Total school days of students	55,528,200		46,684,820		40,372,179	
	- Total days lost	5,912,910	10.6	3,777,055	8.1	2,993,153	7.4
	Students who lost 20-plus days	116,365	37.0	57,001	22.8	41,591	18.7
	Students suspended	450	0.1	382	0.1	326	0.1
	Students expelled	3	0.001	0	0.000	9	0.006
Mainstream with special classes	Total schools	525		850		1,017	
	- Responded	410	78.1	655	77.1	773	76.0
	Total students in responding schools	118,896		176,866	78.4	203,101	77.2
	- Total school days of students	21,639,072		32,189,612		37,167,483	
	- Total days lost	2,612,164	12.1	2,939,175	9.1	3,131,017	8.4
	Students who lost 20-plus days	53,770	45.3	50,720	28.7	50,942	25.4
	Students suspended	404	0.4	563	0.4	764	0.5
	Students expelled	2	0.001	5	0.009	13	0.010
Special schools	Total schools	126		126		127	
	- Responded	80	63.5	75	59.5	68	53.5
	Total students in responding schools	5,088		5,364	62.2	4,777	53.3
	- Total school days of students	926,016		976,248		874,191	
	- Total days lost	164,755	17.8	149,915	15.4	123,155	14.1
	Students who lost 20-plus days	2,937	56.4	2,430	44.8	1,968	41.8
	Students suspended	125	2.8	190	4.0	175	6.0
	Students expelled	2	0.035	5	0.100	5	0.175

The response rate has remained stagnant across mainstream and mainstream with special classes. In mainstream schools the rate decreased from 79.4% to 77.8% and from 77.1% to 76% in mainstream schools with special classes. In special schools, the response rate decreased significantly from 59.5% to 53.5%.

The percentages of students suspended increased in both school types excluding mainstream schools. The expulsion rate increased across all three school types.

2.3.2 DEIS Status

In 2023-24, DEIS Urban Band 1 (UB1) schools had the highest reported rates of days lost and students with 20-plus days absent (Table 2.4), followed by Urban Band 2 schools (UB2) and rural DEIS schools. This follows a trend established in the pre-pandemic years. In non-DEIS schools, urban schools continue to report higher figures for absentee metrics compared to their rural counterparts. Suspension and expulsion rates are highest in Urban Band 1 schools, followed by Urban Band 2 and rural DEIS schools. Non-DEIS urban schools have a higher rate of suspension and expulsion than Urban Band 2 and a lower rate compared to Urban Band 1. Rural non-DEIS schools had the same rate of suspension, and a higher rate of expulsion compared to rural DEIS schools. Expulsions remain rare at primary level.

Figure 2.6 Percentage of days lost for primary schools by DEIS status, 2005–22

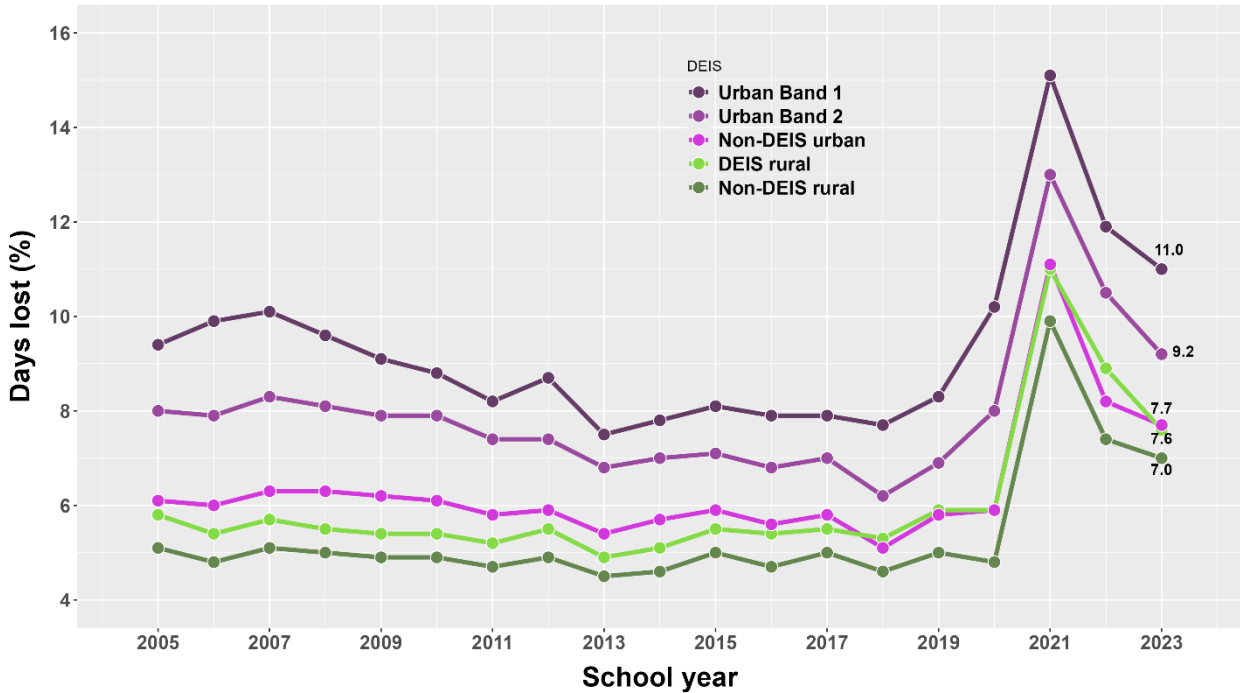


Table 2.4 Summary of non-attendance measures for primary schools by DEIS status, 2021–23

School type	DEIS status		2021–22		2022–23		2023–24	
			<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Urban	Band 1	Total Schools	229		306		306	
		- Responded	159	69.4	221	72.2	219	71.6
		Total days lost	989,464	15.1	1,099,380	11.9	994,183	11.0
		Students who lost 20-plus days	20,617	57.6	21,511	42.9	18,792	38.0
		Students suspended	332	1.0	438	0.9	509	1.1
		Students expelled	2	0.004	1	0.005	7	0.026
	Band 2	Total Schools	104		151		150	
		- Responded	80	76.9	120	79.5	113	75.3
		Total days lost	556,708	13.0	646,261	10.5	562,895	9.2
		Students who lost 20-plus days	11,753	50.7	11,633	33.5	10,682	34.0
		Students suspended	119	0.8	89	0.3	102	0.4
		Students expelled	1	0.018	0	0.000	3	0.012
	Non-DEIS	Total Schools	914		795		790	
		- Responded	688	75.3	605	76.1	589	74.6
		Total days lost	4,004,620	11.1	2,730,589	8.2	2,511,227	7.7
		Students who lost 20-plus days	79,818	42.0	42,955	25.9	36,966	23.7
		Students suspended	393	0.5	427	0.6	438	0.8
		Students expelled	3	0.002	8	0.017	8	0.024
Rural	DEIS	Total Schools	356		509		508	
		- Responded	278	78.1	407	80.0	368	72.4
		Total days lost	419,647	11.0	549,233	8.9	415,250	7.6
		Students who lost 20-plus days	8,097	37.4	8,797	28.2	5,927	20.2
		Students suspended	20	0.1	45	0.1	56	0.1
		Students expelled	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Non-DEIS	Total Schools	1,627		1,460		1,461	
		- Responded	1,297	79.7	1,159	79.4	1,164	79.7
		Total days lost	2,719,390	9.9	1,840,682	7.4	1,763,770	7.0
		Students who lost 20-plus days	52,787	34.7	25,255	19.1	22,134	16.3
		Students suspended	115	0.1	136	0.1	160	0.1
		Students expelled	1	0.002	1	0.001	9	0.006

2.3.3 County

Table 2.5 presents the mean percentages at the county level for days lost and 20-plus day absences. More populated counties tend to have higher rates of non-attendance. Wexford has the most days lost in 2023-24, followed by Dublin and Galway. The highest percentage of students with 20 or more days absent was seen in Dublin, followed by Clare and Louth.

Table 2.5 Summary of total days lost and 20-plus day absences for primary schools by county, 2019–23

Region	Total days lost					Students who lost 20-plus days				
	19–20	20–21	21–22	22–23	23–24	19–20	20–21	21–22	22–23	23–24
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Carlow	6.7	6.1	11.5	10.7	7.4	6.3	11.2	42.3	25.0	20.0
Cavan	5.4	5.2	10.1	7.7	6.5	4.2	8.3	33.1	18.9	15.3
Clare	5.6	4.9	9.7	8.5	7.7	5.0	8.4	32.8	24.3	28.1
Cork	5.4	5.2	10.8	7.9	7.7	4.4	8.3	36.7	21.8	19.9
Donegal	5.1	6.1	10.4	8.4	7.1	3.2	10.4	36.1	23.4	18.2
Dublin	6.7	7.6	12.3	10.1	9.5	7.7	16.5	45.5	31.2	28.2
Galway	5.4	4.9	10.0	10.6	8.5	4.4	7.5	34.6	29.7	21.6
Kerry	5.8	5.6	10.8	9.0	8.0	4.9	9.0	37.0	25.4	20.9
Kildare	6.1	6.6	12.4	9.9	7.8	5.3	10.5	43.5	26.6	20.3
Kilkenny	6.1	5.0	10.2	7.4	7.8	3.8	8.1	36.8	18.5	16.1
Laois	5.7	6.9	12.1	9.3	8.1	3.8	12.3	45.2	26.1	22.5
Leitrim	5.9	5.9	10.9	8.6	7.4	5.5	8.0	36.2	22.9	20.2
Limerick	5.6	6.8	11.4	8.3	7.5	4.8	13.6	40.1	22.2	20.0
Longford	6.3	7.2	11.3	8.6	7.4	6.3	14.9	43.6	25.1	18.0
Louth	6.0	6.6	11.9	8.8	8.1	5.2	11.8	44.3	26.3	23.5
Mayo	5.9	4.8	11.2	8.4	7.6	4.4	6.3	39.7	23.3	19.5
Meath	5.5	5.5	10.6	8.5	7.6	3.8	8.9	37.4	23.2	19.3
Monaghan	4.3	4.8	9.1	7.0	6.3	2.4	6.3	28.5	15.9	12.4
Offaly	6.1	6.0	11.1	8.4	7.9	5.4	11.1	46.1	24.3	22.2
Roscommon	6.1	6.2	11.2	8.9	8.0	5.5	10.0	36.6	26.9	21.2
Sligo	5.7	5.6	9.9	8.3	7.2	4.8	8.3	34.2	22.0	16.4
Tipperary	5.4	5.0	10.1	8.4	8.4	4.2	7.8	36.0	22.3	22.2
Waterford	5.8	5.5	10.3	8.2	7.6	4.6	9.3	37.0	23.1	20.7
Westmeath	6.2	6.2	11.1	8.6	7.8	6.0	11.9	41.1	28.3	20.8
Wexford	5.9	5.9	11.4	9.1	10.2	5.5	10.8	41.5	26.0	20.7
Wicklow	5.3	5.3	11.4	8.2	7.6	3.6	8.4	42.2	23.3	20.1
State	5.8	5.9	11.0	8.9	8.1	5.0	10.4	39.0	25.0	21.4

Suspensions and expulsions are rare events at the county level. The highest suspension rates were in Limerick with 1.28% of students receiving a suspension, followed by Dublin with 0.91% and Carlow with 0.75%. These three counties had the highest rates last year also. Expulsions are more widespread than reported in the previous year, when only six counties had reported expulsions. 13 counties had at least one expulsion: Carlow, Clare, Cork, Dublin, Kildare, Laois, Leitrim, Louth, Offaly, Tipperary, Westmeath and Wexford.

2.4 Post-Primary Schools

This section follows the same format as the previous section, with post-primary schools divided into school type, DEIS status and county. The percentages presented are calculated in the same manner outlined there.

2.4.1 School Type

At post-primary level we have three school subcategories: voluntary secondary, community and comprehensive, and education and training boards. 2023-24 saw voluntary secondary schools continue to have the lowest percentages for total days lost and students absent for 20 days or more. Both absentee metrics have decreased across all three subcategories. Suspensions decreased in voluntary secondary and community and comprehensive schools and rose in education and training board schools. Expulsions increased in all three school subcategories. The full results for the last three school years are presented below (Table 2.6).

Table 2.6 Summary of non-attendance measures for post-primary schools by school type, 2021–23

School type	Measure	2021–22		2022–23		2023–24	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Voluntary secondary	Total schools	385		384		379	
	- Responded	249	64.7	270	70.3	268	70.7
	Students in responding schools	140,789	67.0	152,816	70.8	157,790	71.8
	- Total school days of students	23,370,974		25,367,456		26,350,930	
	- Total days lost	2,622,590	11.2	2,612,650	10.3	2,902,474	11.0
	Students who lost 20-plus days	33,101	24.0	29,413	19.9	29,324	18.7
	Students suspended	3,418	2.6	4,669	3.3	4,427	2.9
	Students expelled	27	0.027	52	0.043	53	0.045
Community & comprehensive	Total schools	96		96		97	
	- Responded	66	68.8	69	71.9	81	83.5
	Students in responding schools	41,850	66.2	47,573	73.0	55,124	82.3
	- Total school days of students	6,947,100		7,897,118		9,205,708	
	- Total days lost	987,077	14.2	1,041,124	13.2	1,077,488	11.7
	Students who lost 20-plus days	12,280	31.1	11,886	26.7	12,370	23.1
	Students suspended	1,973	4.7	2,489	5.2	2,042	4.1
	Students expelled	17	0.049	20	0.047	29	0.066
Education and training boards	Total schools	247		247		246	
	- Responded	156	63.2	180	72.9	192	78.1
	Students in responding schools	75,024	63.4	94,616	75.5	106,301	81.8
	- Total school days of students	12,453,984		15,706,256		17,752,267	
	- Total days lost	1,768,411	14.2	1,915,673	12.2	2,049,281	11.5
	Students who lost 20-plus days	23,716	33.2	24,584	27.0	25,918	25.6
	Students suspended	3,267	4.9	4,750	5.2	5,158	4.8
	Students expelled	41	0.055	62	0.070	68	0.060

2.4.2 DEIS Status

At post-primary level DEIS status schools have the highest figures for all four absentee measures (Table 2.7). Total days lost increased slightly to 14.1% from 13.9%, while the percentage of students missing 20 days or more fell to 28.3% from 30.7%. Suspensions decreased to 5.7% from 6.8% while expulsions decreased to 0.094% from 0.113%. In non-DEIS schools, total days lost sat 2.8 points lower than their DEIS counterparts at 10.3%, decreased from 10.5% last year. The percentage of students absent for 20 days or more sat at 18.6%, 9.7 points lower than that seen in DEIS schools and down from 19.5% last year. The suspension rate was 2.8%, 2.9 points below the DEIS figure and down from 3.1% last year, while the expulsion rate was 0.06 points lower than in DEIS at 0.0034%, up from 0.023% last year.

Table 2.7 Summary of non-attendance measures for post-primary schools by DEIS status, 2021–23

		2021–22		2022–23		2023–24	
DEIS Status		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
DEIS	Total schools	197		235		232	
	- Responded	136	69.0	171	72.8	178	76.7
	Students in responding schools	56,747		77,156		85,152	79.4
	- Total school days of students	9,420,002		12,807,896		14,220,384	
	- Total days lost	1,462,896	15.5	1,786,395	13.9	1,999,770	14.1
	Students who lost 20-plus days	20,663	36.8	23,665	30.7	24,111	28.3
	Students suspended	3,257	6.2	5,054	6.8	4,758	5.7
	Students expelled	49	0.087	81	0.113	69	0.094
Non-DEIS	Total schools	531		492		490	
	- Responded	335	63.1	348	70.7	363	74.1
	Students in responding schools	200,916		217,849		234,063	75.7
	- Total school days of students	33,352,056		36,162,934		39,088,521	
	- Total days lost	3,915,182	11.7	3,783,052	10.5	4,029,473	10.3
	Students who lost 20-plus days	48,434	24.5	42,228	19.5	43,501	18.6
	Students suspended	5,401	2.6	6,854	3.1	6,869	2.8
	Students expelled	36	0.020	53	0.023	81	0.034

2.4.3 County

At the county level, Longford had the highest proportion of days lost, followed by Louth and Offaly. Previously, Leitrim had been the county with the highest proportion of days lost at 21.7% and had the highest figure for three consecutive years. This year the figure decreased to 14.6%. Monaghan had the lowest proportion of days lost among all counties for the second consecutive year.

Longford also had the highest proportion of students missing 20 days or more in 2023–24, at 31.7%, followed by Wexford at 28.3%, and Galway and Mayo at 27.3%. The figures for total days lost and 20 days plus absences for the last five years is tabulated below in Table 2.8.

Table 2.8 Summary of total days lost and 20-plus day absences for post-primary schools by county, 2019–23

Region	Total days lost					Students who lost 20-plus days				
	19–20	20–21	21–22	22–23	23–24	19–20	20–21	21–22	22–23	23–24
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Carlow	10.7	11.7	15.2	12.9	15.0	13.1	15.9	24.0	25.8	18.3
Cavan	8.0	8.2	11.9	12.4	11.9	14.4	11.0	24.6	20.1	19.0
Clare	6.5	8.5	11.5	13.0	10.1	6.4	11.2	24.0	20.6	17.5
Cork	8.0	8.5	11.4	11.4	11.8	8.3	10.8	21.4	20.9	21.1
Donegal	9.0	12.4	14.1	11.1	15.1	11.0	17.7	33.6	27.0	23.1
Dublin	8.8	10.0	13.4	11.0	10.0	11.4	14.6	28.1	22.4	20.8
Galway	8.5	10.0	12.9	12.4	12.5	11.1	14.2	30.2	23.5	27.3
Kerry	8.5	10.0	13.3	12.4	13.1	10.9	14.6	28.6	25.0	21.7
Kildare	7.6	7.0	10.7	10.3	10.0	9.4	9.0	28.5	22.2	18.8
Kilkenny	7.9	8.7	10.6	9.6	8.8	10.3	12.8	26.1	20.6	21.7
Laois	11.7	10.4	12.1	13.1	12.2	11.0	23.7	44.6	39.0	23.8
Leitrim	9.5	17.8	19.5	21.7	14.6	8.5	15.8	18.9	26.6	18.2
Limerick	8.1	7.3	14.3	11.4	9.7	9.7	9.4	33.5	22.9	19.3
Longford	10.1	16.8	15.8	16.0	19.2	10.3	26.3	32.9	33.7	31.7
Louth	5.6	9.0	9.4	11.1	16.3	5.0	10.6	24.1	22.1	19.8
Mayo	9.6	9.0	13.5	12.5	11.9	10.9	12.2	31.0	27.7	27.3
Meath	5.4	6.4	12.5	12.0	9.4	6.6	7.9	29.0	26.3	19.1
Monaghan	7.4	6.4	11.4	9.0	7.5	9.8	13.4	30.8	14.8	15.8
Offaly	8.8	7.3	11.0	14.4	15.8	11.9	4.4	22.9	22.1	19.9
Roscommon	8.4	9.6	11.2	12.9	11.3	9.4	15.0	25.8	23.2	25.3
Sligo	8.4	11.9	17.2	14.2	11.0	9.9	18.0	30.9	25.7	25.0
Tipperary	8.4	6.6	10.9	9.2	9.0	8.1	7.4	24.2	16.4	18.7
Waterford	8.3	9.4	12.8	10.7	11.8	12.2	12.0	23.9	22.3	24.9
Westmeath	9.4	9.5	14.3	14.1	12.2	10.0	17.6	35.2	25.8	24.5
Wexford	11.3	10.0	14.6	13.5	12.4	16.5	14.5	34.5	30.0	28.3
Wicklow	8.6	9.6	13.8	12.7	10.9	12.1	14.2	31.5	27.4	24.0
State	8.5	9.5	12.9	11.7	11.4	10.4	13.3	28.0	23.3	21.8

3 Student Absence Report

The section presents data on the reasons supplied by schools for their reported 20-day plus absences via the SAR. The SAR is restricted to the age range 6-16 years. This means that the SAR is not directly comparable to the results of the AAR, although it can be assumed with confidence that the result will be similar. SARs are submitted twice within each year by schools. The first submission covers the September to December period, and the second covers January to June period. An SAR submission is made within either period whenever a student reaches a cumulative total of 20 or more days absent. If a student is absent for 20 days or more in period one, and reaches 20 days absent in period 2, a second report will be submitted. The reasons for absence are recorded under six categories: illness, urgent, holidays, suspensions, other, and unexplained.

3.1 Submissions

The return of SAR submissions to typical pre-pandemic levels has continued at primary level but has remained stable at an elevated level at post-primary level. The total submissions were 84,106 for primary, a decrease of 3,335 from last year, while the total at post-primary level increased slightly by 1,389 to 50,627. The SAR totals for 2017 to 2023 incl. are graphed below in Figure 3.1, and the response rates are tabled on the next page in Table 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Number of submissions from primary and post-primary schools for School Absence Reports, 2017–22

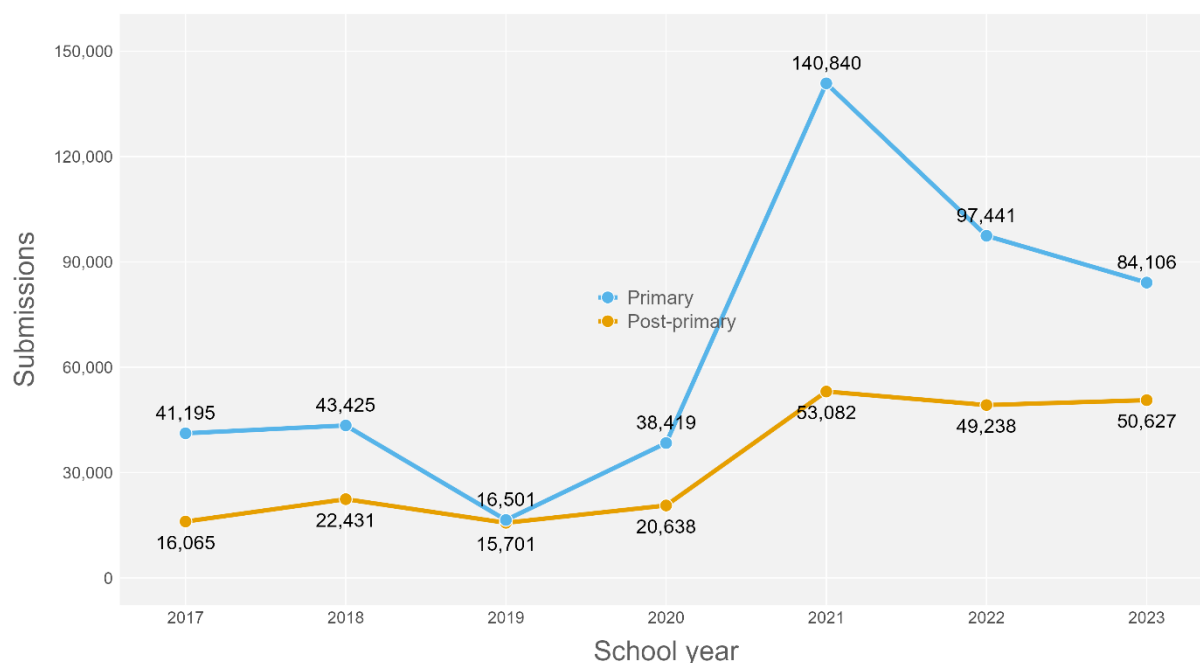


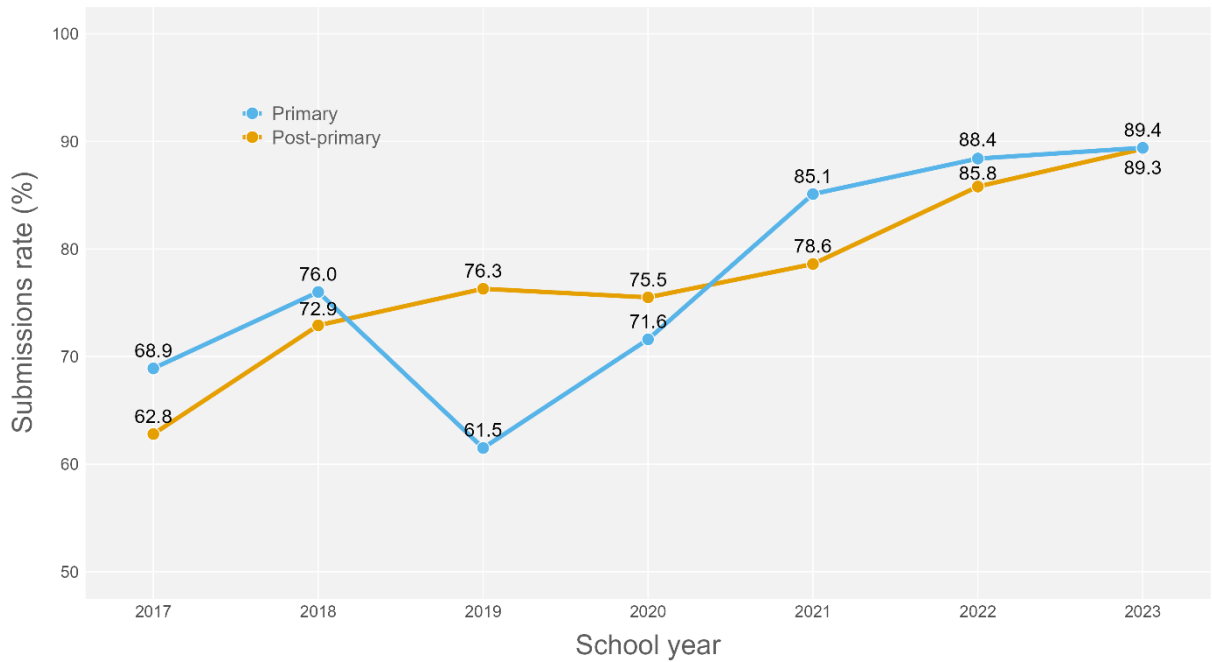
Table 3.1 Submission rates from primary and post-primary schools for School Absence Reports, 2020–23

School level	Measure	2021–22		2022–23		2023–24	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Primary	Total schools	3,230		3,221		3,215	
	- Responded	2,749	85.1	2,846	88.4	2,875	89.4
	Total students	554,464		557,823		556,983	
	- In responding schools	476,729	86.0	507,284	90.9	512,436	92.0
	- Who lost 20-plus days	140,840	29.5	97,441	19.2	84,106	16.4
Post-primary	Total schools	728		727		722	
	- Responded	572	78.6	624	85.8	645	89.3
	Total students	391,698		406,392		416,620	
	- In responding schools	313,672	80.1	355,232	87.4	380,277	91.3
	- Who lost 20-plus days	53,082	16.9	49,238	13.9	50,627	13.3

The submission rate from both primary and post-primary schools has continued to increase since the introduction of the SAR system at the start of the academic year 2017-18. This trend continued in 2023-24, with the response rate increasing to 88.4% and 85.8% at primary and post-primary levels respectively. The difference between the response rate for AAR and SAR

has increased to 12.1 points from 10.4 at primary level, while at post-primary level the gap has fallen from 14.4 points to 10.9 points.

Figure 3.2 Submission rates from primary and post-primary schools for School Absence Reports, 2017–22



3.2 Summary Results

In this section we present results from the SAR for 2023-24. Tabled below (Table 3.2) are the aggregate results at primary and post-primary levels for the last three years. At primary level, *illness* once again accounted for the largest share of absences at 39.9%. This was a fall of 3.1 points from last year. Also, in line with previous years, the second and third most cited category for absence were *unexplained* and *other*, sitting at 30.2% and 12.8%, with neither figure changing significantly from the previous year.

At post-primary level, *unexplained* was the most cited category of absence at 51.4%. This figure is in line with figures in previous years. The second and third most cited reasons were *illness* and *other* at 28.1% and 14.9% respectively. There was no significant change in the breakdown of reasons for student absences from last year at post-primary level.

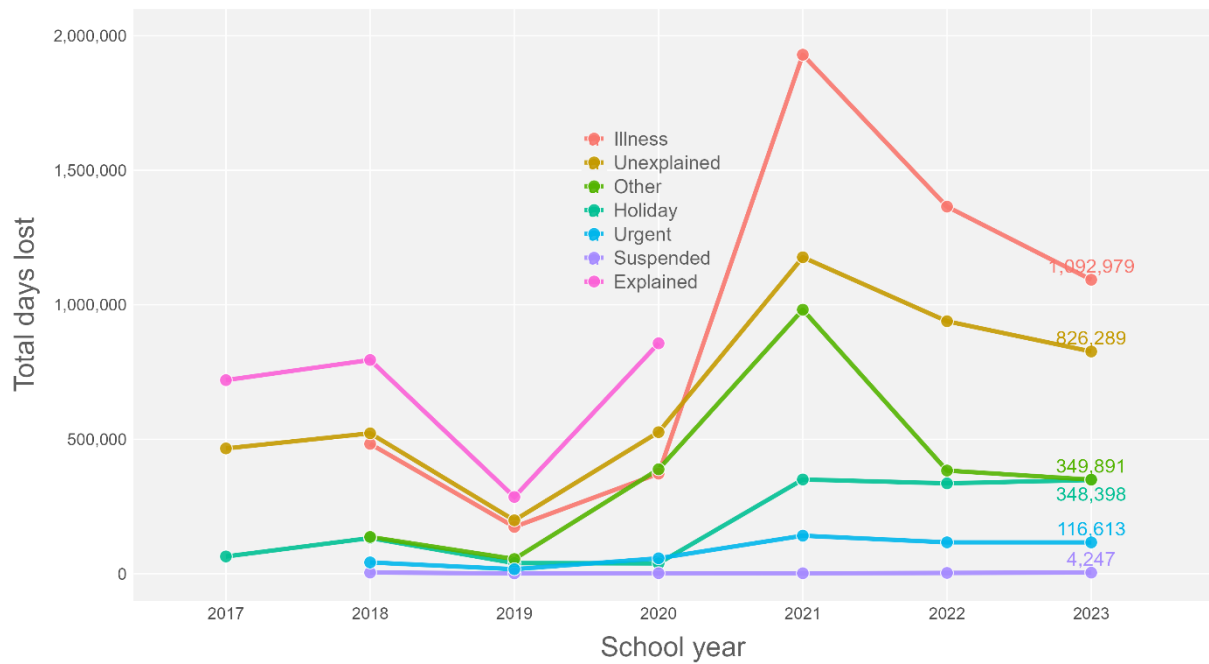
Table 3.2 Summary of reasons for student absences from primary and post-primary schools, 2020–23

		2021–22		2022–23		2023–24	
School level		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Primary	Total schools	3,230		3,221		3,215	
	- Responded	2,749	85.1	2,846	88.4	2,875	89.4
	Total students	554,464		557,823		556,983	
	- In responding schools	476,729	86.0	507,284	90.9	512,436	92.0
	- Who lost 20-plus days	140,840	29.5	97,441	19.2	84,106	16.4
	Total days lost	4,581,690		3,173,325		2,738,417	
	- Illness	1,929,426	42.1	1,364,841	43	1,092,979	39.9
	- Urgent	141,582	3.1	116,824	3.7	116,613	4.3
	- Holiday	350,474	7.6	366,159	11.5	348,398	12.7
	- Suspended	1,968	0.0	3,134	0.1	4,247	0.2
	- Other	981,532	21.4	383,639	12.1	349,891	12.8
	- Unexplained	1,176,708	25.7	938,728	29.6	826,289	30.2
Post-primary	Total schools	728		727		722	
	- Responded	572	78.6	624	85.8	645	89.3
	Total students	391,698		406,392		416,620	
	- In responding schools	313,672	80.1	355,232	87.4	380,277	91.3
	- Who lost 20-plus days	53,082	16.9	49,238	13.9	50,627	13.3
	Total days lost	2,052,811		1,940,720		1,983,155	
	- Illness	578,363	28.2	538,934	27.8	556,832	28.1
	- Urgent	40,896	2.0	47,507	2.4	50,571	2.6
	- Holiday	12,127	0.6	26,949	1.4	43,522	2.2
	- Suspended	13,180	0.6	16,886	0.9	16,547	0.8
	- Other	345,043	16.8	287,688	14.8	296,144	14.9
	- Unexplained	1,063,202	51.8	1,022,756	52.7	1,019,539	51.4

In the first SAR report published for the academic year 2017-18 there were only three categories of absence: *explained*, *unexplained*, and *holidays*. In 2018-19 the explained category was subdivided into *illness*, *suspensions*, *other* and *urgent*.

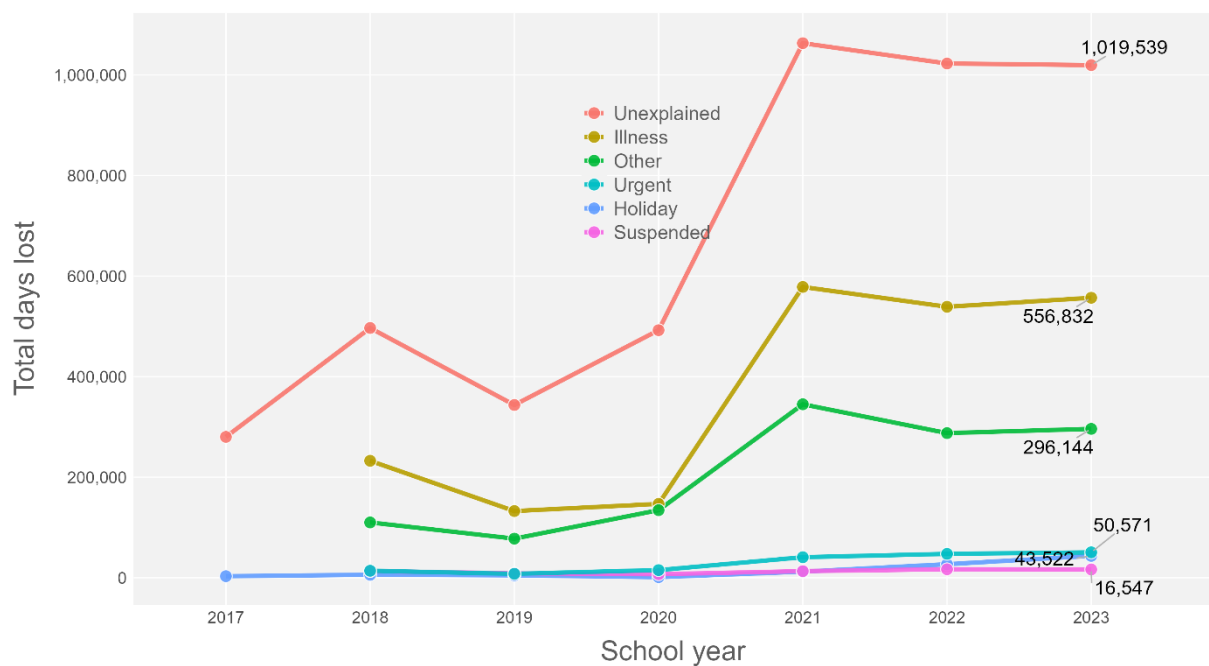
The figure below (Figure 3.3) shows that the bulk of the decrease in totals days lost at primary level is accounted for by a reduction in the total days lost due to *illness* and *unexplained* absences. The number of *other*, *urgent* and *holiday* absences have remained static, and *urgent* and *holiday* absences have remained so since the 2021-22 academic year.

Figure 3.3 Number of total days lost for primary schools by reason, 2017–23



At post-primary level, the ordering of the reasons cited for absences have continued to remain consistent (Figure 3.4). The elevation in the total numbers of days lost brought on by the pandemic and the reopening of schools to full schedules in 2021-22 remains, and the number of citations for each category has remained stable since that year. Days lost and 20-days absent rates continue to be well in excess of those seen at primary level.

Figure 3.4 Number of total days lost for post-primary schools by reason, 2017–22



3.3 Primary Schools

This section follows the same outline as that seen in section 2.3, providing an overview of SAR submissions by school type, DEIS status and county. We also include a breakdown by class year, from junior infants up to sixth class.

3.3.1 School Type

For each of the three school types, *illness* was the most cited reason for 20-day plus absences. In mainstream schools, this amounted to 41.7%, down from 44.7% in 2022-23. In mainstream schools with special classes, this figure was 39% (down from 41.8%) and in special schools it was 32.1% (down from 34.7%). The second highest category for all three school types was *unexplained*, followed by *holiday* for mainstream and mainstream with special classes, and *other* in special schools. The ordering of categories by citations has remained largely stable over the last three years, with the most notable change being *holiday* overtaking *other* in mainstream and mainstream with special classes, in 2022-23. The full results over the last three years are presented in Table 3.3. A visual breakdown of total days lost for the last six years by school type is presented on the next page in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.5 Number of total days lost for post-primary schools by reason, 2018–23

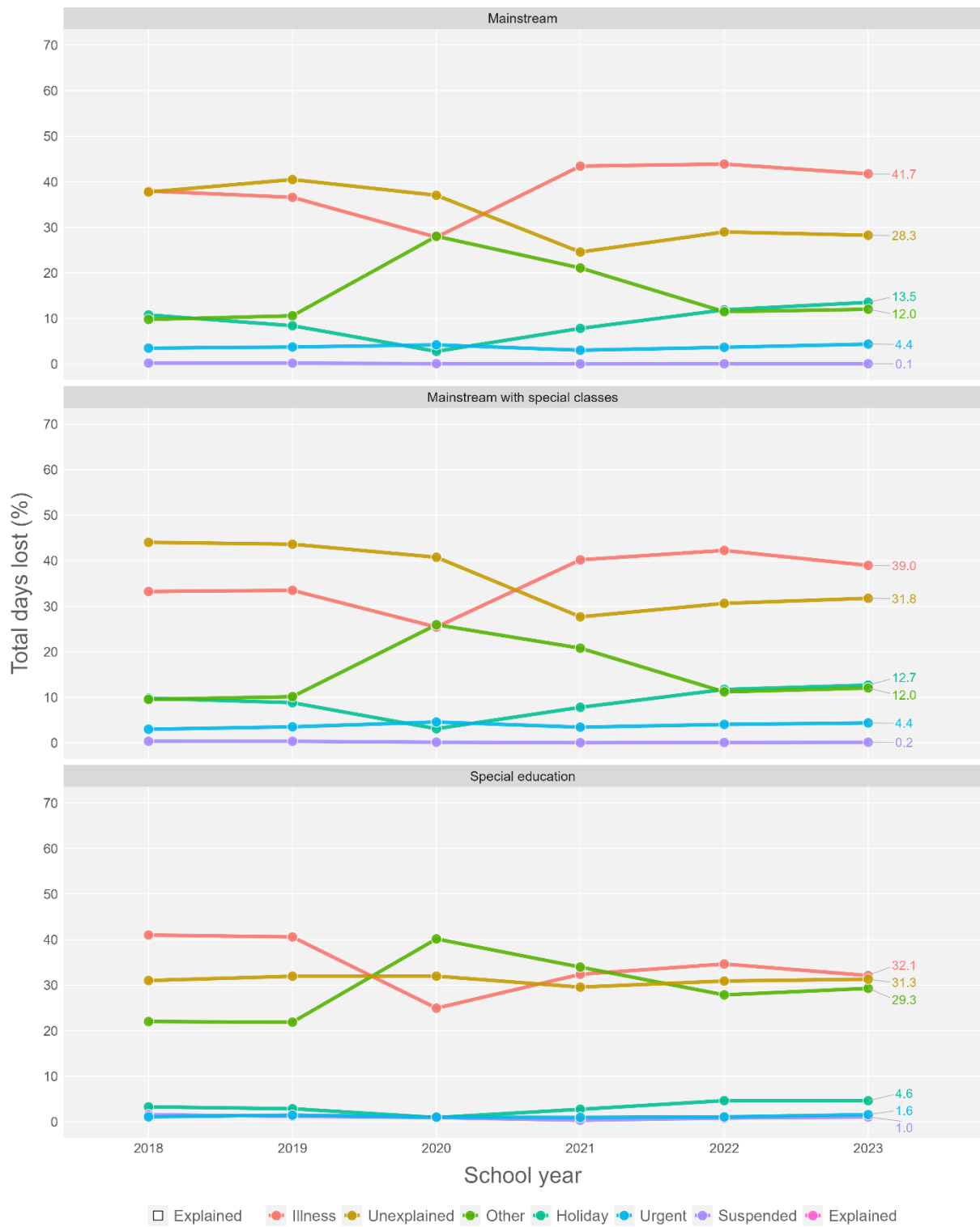


Table 3.3 Summary of reasons for student absences from primary schools by school type, 2021–23

School type	Measure	2021–22		2022–23		2023–24	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Mainstream	Total schools	2,579		2,245		2,071	
	- Responded	2,193	85.0	1,985	88.4	1,839	88.8
	Students in responding schools	340,364		296,161		262,599	
	- Who lost 20-plus days	96,000	28.2	51,082	17.2	38,528	14.7
	Total days lost	3,045,480		1,610,055		1,206,549	
	- Illness	1,323,407	43.5	720,308	44.7	503,680	41.7
	- Urgent	92,200	3.0	58,560	3.6	52,631	4.4
	- Holiday	237,949	7.8	195,287	12.1	163,424	13.5
	- Suspended	897	0.0	649	0.0	819	0.1
	- Other	642,382	21.1	184,890	11.5	145,024	12.0
	- Unexplained	748,645	24.6	450,361	28.0	340,971	28.3
Mainstream with special classes	Total schools	525		850		1,017	
	- Responded	455	86.7	763	89.8	929	91.3
	Students in responding schools	129,699		204,105		242,318	
	- Who lost 20-plus days	41,688	32.1	43,626	21.4	42,854	17.7
	Total days lost	1,388,140		1,430,345		1,406,048	
	- Illness	558,053	40.2	598,467	41.8	547,886	39.0
	- Urgent	47,940	3.5	56,816	4.0	61,658	4.4
	- Holiday	108,450	7.8	164,687	11.5	178,484	12.7
	- Suspended	569	0.0	1,392	0.1	2,147	0.2
	- Other	288,854	20.8	161,708	11.3	169,367	12.0
	- Unexplained	384,274	27.7	447,275	31.3	446,506	31.8
Special schools	Total schools	126		126		127	
	- Responded	101	80.2	98	77.8	102	80.3
	Students in responding schools	6,666		7,018		7,519	
	- Who lost 20-plus days	3,152	47.3	2,733	38.9	2,461	32.7
	Total days lost	148,070		132,925		118,026	
	- Illness	47,966	32.4	46,066	34.7	37,911	32.1
	- Urgent	1,442	1.0	1,448	1.1	1,863	1.6
	- Holiday	4,075	2.8	6,185	4.7	5,466	4.6
	- Suspended	502	0.3	1,093	0.8	1,238	1.0
	- Other	50,296	34.0	37,041	27.9	34,590	29.3
	- Unexplained	43,789	29.6	41,092	30.9	36,958	31.3

3.3.2 DEIS status

In Urban Band 1 DEIS schools, unexplained citations have increased slightly to 42.6% and continues to be the most cited reason for absence, followed by illness, which has decreased to 32.6% from 35.8%. For all other categories, illness continues to be the most cited reason for *absence*, followed by *unexplained* absences.

Table 3.4 Summary of reasons for student absences of total days lost from primary schools by DEIS status, 2021–23

School type	DEIS status	Measure	2021–22		2022–23		2023–24	
			<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Urban	Band 1	Illness	182,690	30.9	222,420	35.8	188,973	32.6
		Urgent	16,585	2.8	20,993	3.4	23,494	4.1
		Holiday	30,980	5.2	55,398	8.9	57,982	10.0
		Suspended	489	0.1	919	0.1	1,411	0.2
		Other	109,896	18.6	63,765	10.3	60,457	10.4
		Unexplained	250,616	42.4	257,880	41.5	246,980	42.6
	Band 2	Illness	114,906	38.0	145,520	41.8	102,286	38.7
		Urgent	10,979	3.6	16,199	4.7	13,757	5.2
		Holiday	24,951	8.2	40,856	11.7	33,607	12.7
		Suspended	213	0.1	197	0.1	255	0.1
		Other	61,732	20.4	40,311	11.6	33,758	12.8
		Unexplained	89,871	29.7	104,788	30.1	80,738	30.5
	Non-DEIS	Illness	895,952	42.5	545,839	44.1	433,991	41.6
		Urgent	74,087	3.5	50,527	4.1	47,063	4.5
		Holiday	186,709	8.9	162,904	13.2	152,062	14.6
		Suspended	1,012	0.0	1,532	0.1	1,702	0.2
		Other	462,873	22.0	157,588	12.7	143,268	13.7
		Unexplained	486,162	23.1	318,035	25.7	266,087	25.5
Rural	DEIS	Illness	106,194	46.6	111,373	44.1	79,888	40.9
		Urgent	6,290	2.8	8,344	3.3	7,460	3.8
		Holiday	11,534	5.1	22,548	8.9	19,199	9.8
		Suspended	53	0.0	132	0.1	161	0.1
		Other	44,365	19.5	31,641	12.5	24,834	12.7
		Unexplained	59,601	26.1	78,532	31.1	63,825	32.7
	Non-DEIS	Illness	629,684	46.5	339,689	47.5	284,339	43.9
		Urgent	33,641	2.5	20,761	2.9	24,378	3.8
		Holiday	96,300	7.1	84,453	11.8	84,524	13.1
		Suspended	201	0.0	354	0.0	675	0.1
		Other	302,666	22.4	90,334	12.6	86,664	13.4
		Unexplained	290,458	21.5	179,493	25.1	166,805	25.8

3.3.3 County

The SAR result breakdown by county at primary level is presented in the appendix in [Table 0.1](#). Notable figures include Leitrim and Longford, where *unexplained* absences were ~33% higher than the State average, and Carlow where unexplained absences were 10 points lower than the state average.

3.3.4 Class Year

At primary level, the trend of absence increasing alongside the class standard remains. SARs are submitted for pupils over 6 years of age. Most 7-year-olds will be enrolled in 1st class. Consequently, we see smaller numbers of reports for junior and senior infants. Students in special classes have once again the highest incidence of 20 days absent reports, at 44%. Amongst the rest, sixth class students have the highest rate of SAR reports, at 20.9%. The full breakdown by class year is presented in [Table 0.2](#) in the appendix.

3.4 Post-Primary Schools

This section provides an overview of the SAR results by school type, DEIS type, county, and class year within post-primary schools. The categories of class year within post-primary schools range from 1st year to 6th year. SARs are only submitted for pupils under the age of 16, who are, at most, typically enrolled in transition year (4th year). Some class reports are included for 5th and 6th year students, but these are far less numerous as the report is not mandatory for these pupils. Because of this, the results of these senior cycle years need to be treated with caution.

3.4.1 School Type

Across all three school types, *unexplained* was the most cited reason for absence. Voluntary secondary schools have the lowest recorded figure at 45.5%, a slight decrease from last year, followed by Community and Comprehensive schools at 53.9% and Education and Training Boards at 56.7%. Illness was the second most cited reason for absence across all three types, and the highest figure was seen in Voluntary Secondary schools (32%), followed by Community and Comprehensive (27.8%) and Education and Training Boards (23.9%). The third most common reason cited for absences was the *other* category for all three types.

Table 3.5 Summary of reasons for student absences from post-primary schools by school type, 2021–23

School type	Measure	2021–22		2022–23		2023–24	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Voluntary secondary	Total schools	385		384		379	
	- Responded	301	78.2	331	86.2	342	90.2
	Students in responding schools	169,014		189,438		200,676	
	- Who lost 20-plus days	23,303	13.8	21,645	11.4	22,100	11.0
	Total days lost	862,983		823,473		844,347	
	- Illness	278,025	32.2	261,897	31.8	269,910	32.0
	- Urgent	21,477	2.5	25,223	3.1	27,984	3.3
	- Holiday	6,222	0.7	13,854	1.7	21,171	2.5
	- Suspended	3,957	0.5	6,167	0.7	6,419	0.8
	- Other	149,852	17.4	132,652	16.1	134,789	16.0
	- Unexplained	403,450	46.8	383,680	46.6	384,074	45.5
Community & comprehensive	Total schools	96		96		97	
	- Responded	82	85.4	84	87.5	86	88.7
	Students in responding schools	53,510		56,826		60,492	
	- Who lost 20-plus days	9,849	18.4	8,487	14.9	9,151	15.1
	Total days lost	383,467		339,536		363,938	
	- Illness	109,212	28.5	95,898	28.2	101,301	27.8
	- Urgent	7,675	2.0	9,135	2.7	9,770	2.7
	- Holiday	2,218	0.6	4,771	1.4	9,316	2.6
	- Suspended	3,116	0.8	2,656	0.8	2,779	0.8
	- Other	61,416	16.0	40,141	11.8	44,450	12.2
	- Unexplained	199,830	52.1	186,935	55.1	196,322	53.9
Education and training boards	Total schools	247		247		246	
	- Responded	189	76.5	209	84.6	216	87.8
	Students in responding schools	91,148		108,968		129,980	
	- Who lost 20-plus days	19,930	21.9	19,106	17.5	19,283	14.8
	Total days lost	806,361		777,711		771,335	
	- Illness	191,126	23.7	181,139	23.3	184,670	23.9
	- Urgent	11,744	1.5	13,149	1.7	12,750	1.7
	- Holiday	3,687	0.5	8,324	1.1	12,993	1.7
	- Suspended	6,107	0.8	8,063	1.0	7,338	1.0
	- Other	133,775	16.6	114,895	14.8	116,366	15.1
	- Unexplained	459,922	57.0	452,141	58.1	437,218	56.7

3.4.2 DEIS Status

At post-primary level, schools are categorised as DEIS or non-DEIS only. DEIS schools had 61.5% *unexplained* absences (Table 3.6). This level is in line with previous years. In non-DEIS schools the proportion of unexplained absences is 16.7 points lower at 44.8%. This gap has increased by 0.9 points from last year. Illness is the second most cited reason for absence, sitting at 21.8% in DEIS schools and 32.2% in non-DEIS schools, a difference of 10.4% which is all in line with the previous 2 years.

Table 3.6 Summary of reasons for student absences from post-primary schools by DEIS status, 2021–23

DEIS status	Measure	2021–22		2022–23		2023–24	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
DEIS	Total schools	197		235		232	
	- Responded	154	78.2	200	85.1	203	87.5
	Students who lost 20-plus days	16,678		18,351		18,972	
	Total days lost	685,442		774,691		784,443	
	- Illness	147,430	21.5	167,508	21.6	171,101	21.8
	- Urgent	9,001	1.3	14,324	1.8	15,454	2
	- Holiday	3,461	0.5	9,521	1.2	14,400	1.8
	- Suspended	6,491	0.9	9,243	1.2	8,706	1.1
	- Other	110,599	16.1	93,103	12	92,155	11.7
	- Unexplained	408,460	59.6	480,992	62.1	482,627	61.5
Non-DEIS	Total schools	531		492		490	
	- Responded	418	78.7	424	86.2	441	90.0
	Students who lost 20-plus days	36,404		30,887		31,562	
	Total days lost	1,367,369		1,166,029		1,195,177	
	- Illness	430,933	31.5	371,426	31.9	384,780	32.2
	- Urgent	31,895	2.3	33,183	2.8	35,050	2.9
	- Holiday	8,666	0.6	17,428	1.5	29,080	2.4
	- Suspended	6,689	0.5	7,643	0.7	7,830	0.7
	- Other	234,444	17.1	194,585	16.7	203,450	17
	- Unexplained	654,742	47.9	541,764	46.5	534,987	44.8

3.4.3 County

At the county level, populated regions with large urban areas have the highest amount of submissions, with Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Kildare the highest, all submitting over 100,000 reports in 2023-24 (Appendix [Table 0.3](#)). Outliers include Longford, who reported 25.3% of the covered student population as having missed 20 days or more. Longford was followed by Leitrim (17%) and Donegal (16.4%). *Unexplained* was the most cited reason for absences for all counties except for Kilkenny, where *illness* was the most cited reason.

3.4.4 Class Year

Within post-primary class years, most 15-year-olds are found in the third year or transition year (4th year), with a smaller proportion in the first years of the Leaving Certificate programmes (5th year). SAR is only required if a pupil is aged under 16 years. While some 15-year-olds are found in other class year groupings up to and including sixth year, they are extremely rare. The figures beyond third year should be treated with caution.

The number of students with 20 or more days of absences peaked in third year at 20.7%, possibly due to the criteria for under 16 years of age for a SAR submission. The main reason for absences was *unexplained* across all class years and was at least 48% for all class years (Appendix [Table 0.4](#))

4 Methodology

4.1 Data

The legal reason for data collection and reporting are outlined in the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, Section 21(1–6) which states that:

“(1) The principal of a recognised school shall cause to be maintained in respect of each school year a record of the attendance or non-attendance on each school day of each student registered at that school...(2)(b) where a student fails to so attend, the fact of his or her failure and the reasons for such failure...(4) Where—(a) a student is suspended from a recognised school for a period of not less than 6 days, (b) the aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from a recognised school during a school year is not less than 20...(d) a student is, in the opinion of the principal of the recognised school at which he or she is registered, not attending school regularly...(6) The board of management of a recognised school shall, not later than 6 weeks after the end of each school year, submit a report to “the educational welfare officer and the parents’ association of the recognised school.

Unlike previous data before 2019–20, no prior proxy data has been used for anomalous data due to the impact of the pandemic in 2019 and continued disruption since. Earlier years are not representative of the current situation of elevated absenteeism.

The data collection process of late school returns of AAR, initially affected late responders for the 2017–18 data collection in 2019.

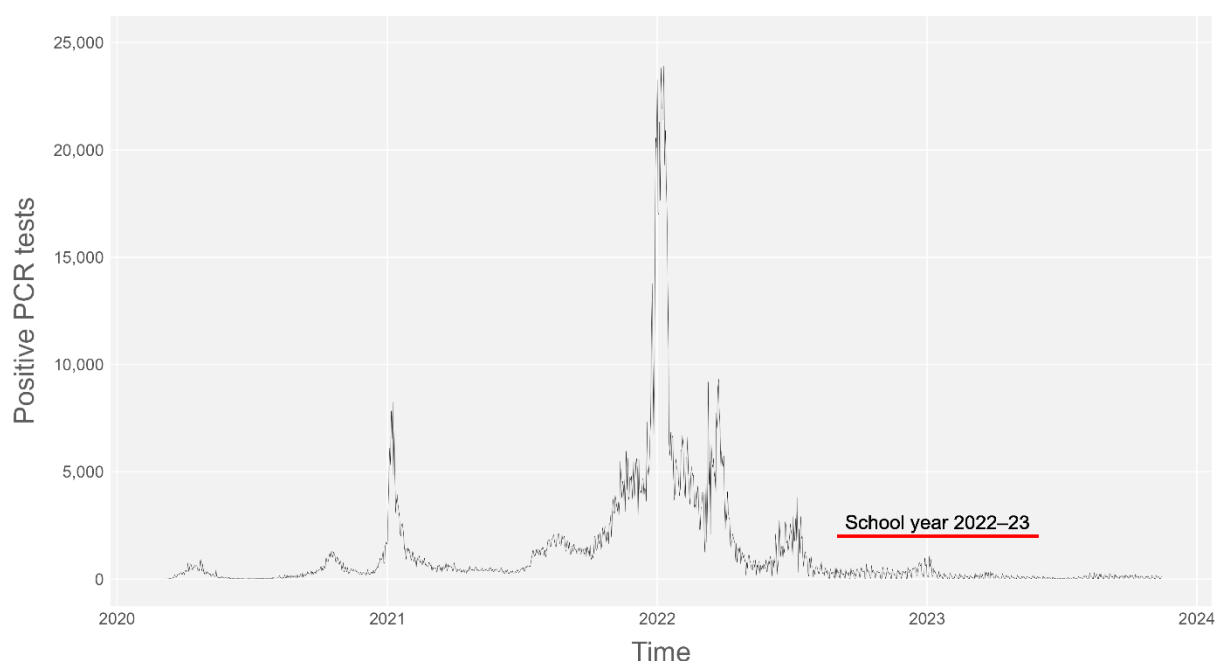
4.2 Schools

Hospital schools and schools with only children younger than seven are excluded at the primary level. Post-primary schools where students are all over 15 years of age were also excluded. The excluded post-primary schools provide only Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses or Repeat Leaving Certificate programmes.

4.2.1 COVID-19

The graph below (Figure 4.1) shows daily confirmed cases of COVID-19 based on polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests. School closures correspond to periods of low positive tests during 2020 and 2021. The high number of positive cases during the 2021–22 school year corresponds to the high number of days lost and 20-plus day absences when schools were fully open. For the school year 2022–23, COVID-19 cases were still recorded but not to the same extent as peaks in the previous years.

Figure 4.1 Number of daily confirmed COVID-19 cases, 2020–24



4.3 Appendix

4.3.1 Primary SAR reports by County

Only mainstream schools were used in the analysis, with special schools excluded, concerning class year.

Table 4.1 Summary of reasons for student absences from primary schools by county, 2023–24 ([return to text](#))

Region	Total students			Total days lost												
	In responding schools	Who lost 20-plus days		Total	Illness		Urgent		Holiday		Suspended		Other		Unexplained	
		<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Carlow	7,404	1,236	16.7	39,994	18,853	48.7	1,910	4.9	4,293	11.1	135	0.3	5,072	13.1	8,453	21.8
Cavan	9,257	1,397	15.1	45,357	19,921	45.4	2,087	4.8	5,519	12.6	15	0.0	5,724	13.0	10,629	24.2
Clare	12,839	2,253	17.5	74,773	30,933	42.7	2,903	4	8,850	12.2	207	0.3	9,488	13.1	20,042	27.7
Cork	58,733	9,061	15.4	305,237	120,770	40.8	11,916	4	38,378	13	434	0.1	43,546	14.7	80,812	27.3
Donegal	18,077	2,590	14.3	84,058	34,593	42.5	3,970	4.9	9,351	11.5	22	0	10,747	13.2	22,630	27.8
Dublin	127,002	21,588	17.0	740,673	261,580	36.4	30,674	4.3	99,255	13.8	1,345	0.2	85,332	11.9	240,454	33.5
Galway	26,620	3,950	14.8	128,598	48,102	38.7	4,801	3.9	14,330	11.5	149	0.1	13,956	11.2	43,110	34.6
Kerry	14,636	2,716	18.6	97,359	33,751	35.7	4,602	4.9	11,193	11.8	107	0.1	13,857	14.7	31,010	32.8
Kildare	27,451	4,274	15.6	139,221	57,427	42.6	6,128	4.5	18,189	13.5	164	0.1	16,735	12.4	36,207	26.8
Kilkenny	10,321	1,396	13.5	44,402	18,076	42.1	1,516	3.5	6,120	14.3	47	0.1	5,897	13.7	11,282	26.3
Laois	9,504	1,798	18.9	61,704	23,259	38.9	2,600	4.3	6,827	11.4	157	0.3	8,293	13.9	18,713	31.3
Leitrim	3,781	713	18.9	24,279	7,898	33.6	1,061	4.5	2,680	11.4	17	0.1	2,972	12.6	8,904	37.8
Limerick	22,179	3,187	14.4	104,528	41,620	41.1	4,869	4.8	11,714	11.6	225	0.2	13,675	13.5	29,108	28.8
Longford	4,953	876	17.7	29,373	9,961	35	1,427	5	2,435	8.6	48	0.2	3,264	11.5	11,328	39.8
Louth	16,908	3,099	18.3	103,806	42,362	42.1	4,598	4.6	13,183	13.1	305	0.3	12,308	12.2	27,880	27.7
Mayo	13,522	2,099	15.5	69,669	29,115	43.2	2,949	4.4	7,479	11.1	37	0.1	8,746	13	19,111	28.3
Meath	25,165	3,935	15.6	128,584	53,813	43.2	6,062	4.9	18,402	14.8	214	0.2	17,439	14	28,612	23
Monaghan	7,276	807	11.1	25,820	9,969	39.9	862	3.5	2,723	10.9	7	0	2,788	11.2	8,612	34.5
Offaly	8,872	1,701	19.2	58,035	23,575	41.9	2,118	3.8	6,442	11.4	30	0.1	6,351	11.3	17,757	31.6
Roscommon	6,909	1,387	20.1	49,757	16,222	33.6	1,708	3.5	5,208	10.8	45	0.1	6,369	13.2	18,741	38.8
Sligo	6,745	960	14.2	30,449	11,397	38.7	1,146	3.9	4,141	14.1	36	0.1	3,742	12.7	8,974	30.5

Tipperary	16,439	2,664	16.2	88,826	37,805	43.9	3,732	4.3	9,654	11.2	97	0.1	11,803	13.7	22,934	26.7
Waterford	13,442	2,570	19.1	86,280	37,013	44.3	3,435	4.1	10,797	12.9	22	0	9,350	11.2	23,023	27.5
Westmeath	10,815	1,729	16.0	57,830	21,959	39.2	2,406	4.3	6,686	11.9	160	0.3	6,925	12.4	17,897	31.9
Wexford	16,381	2,917	17.8	101,875	38,964	39.4	3,408	3.4	10,915	11	55	0.1	12,685	12.8	32,837	33.2
Wicklow	17,205	2,940	17.1	96,849	40,539	43.2	3,264	3.5	12,610	13.4	124	0.1	11,917	12.7	25,375	27
State	512,436	83,843	16.4	2,817,336	1,089,477		116,152		347,374		4,204		348,981		824,435	

4.3.2 Primary SAR reports by Class Year

Table 4.2 Summary of reasons for student absences from primary schools by class year, 2023–24 ([return to text](#))

Class year	Total students			Total days lost												
	In responding schools	Who lost 20-plus days		Total	Illness		Urgent		Holiday		Suspended		Other		Unexplained	
		<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
Junior infants	57,918	993	1.7	34,860	11,855	34	1,278	3.7	3,155	9.1	35	0.1	4,257	12.2	14,280	41
Senior infants	59,647	8,613	14.4	277,066	112,154	40.5	14,273	5.2	38,772	14	65	0	28,912	10.4	82,890	29.9
First class	60,996	10,245	16.8	320,448	132,387	41.3	16,865	5.3	47,527	14.8	118	0	34,067	10.6	89,484	27.9
Second class	60,958	10,054	16.5	313,844	125,688	40	15,145	4.8	45,804	14.6	184	0.1	36,390	11.6	90,633	28.9
Third class	62,867	10,764	17.1	339,848	135,334	39.8	15,179	4.5	46,542	13.7	245	0.1	39,904	11.7	102,644	30.2
Fourth class	63,743	11,305	17.7	357,229	146,276	40.9	15,056	4.2	47,704	13.4	468	0.1	39,739	11.1	107,986	30.2
Fifth class	64,088	12,238	19.1	392,300	159,350	40.6	15,943	4.1	48,548	12.4	446	0.1	46,368	11.8	121,645	31
Sixth class	64,865	13,571	20.9	446,097	176,720	39.6	16,647	3.7	49,082	11	953	0.2	59,447	13.3	143,248	32.1
Special class	8,560	3,766	44.0	130,905	51,802	39.6	3,903	3	14,774	11.3	452	0.3	25,307	19.3	34,667	26.5
Total	503,642	81,549	16.2	2,612,597	1,051,566		114,289		341,908		2,966		314,391		787,477	

4.3.3 Post-Primary SAR reports by County

Table 4.3 Summary of reasons for student absences from post-primary schools by county, 2023–24 ([return to text](#))

Region	Total students			Total days lost													
	In responding schools	Who lost 20-plus days		Total	Illness			Urgent		Holiday		Suspended		Other		Unexplained	
		<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Carlow	6,604	687	10.4	27,549	10,865	40.5	267	1	444	1.7	404	1.5	2,363	8.8	12,508	46.6	
Cavan	5,734	631	11.0	22,717	6,296	28.5	946	4.3	491	2.2	143	0.6	3,357	15.2	10,844	49.1	
Clare	7,901	1,053	13.3	45,102	14,197	32.2	472	1.1	515	1.2	447	1	5,354	12.2	23,051	52.3	
Cork	43,398	5,273	12.2	203,366	64,668	32.7	7,236	3.7	4,391	2.2	1,307	0.7	35,028	17.7	85,386	43.1	
Donegal	14,653	2,404	16.4	92,193	23,239	25.9	2,014	2.2	1,844	2.1	413	0.5	12,151	13.5	50,102	55.8	
Dublin	92,156	12,148	13.2	502,965	118,098	24.1	10,893	2.2	13,031	2.7	5,254	1.1	77,270	15.7	266,111	54.2	
Galway	18,746	2,721	14.5	108,470	27,820	26.3	2,359	2.2	3,128	3	1,060	1	14,939	14.1	56,407	53.4	
Kerry	12,298	1,579	12.8	66,447	16,344	25.2	2,323	3.6	1,357	2.1	259	0.4	11,302	17.4	33,258	51.3	
Kildare	20,302	2,634	13.0	103,691	35,753	35.4	2,881	2.9	2,118	2.1	748	0.7	16,019	15.9	43,512	43.1	
Kilkenny	8,760	995	11.4	37,688	15,176	41.4	3,016	8.2	1,139	3.1	218	0.6	5,597	15.3	11,532	31.4	
Laois	6,373	818	12.8	32,548	10,808	34.1	366	1.2	682	2.1	383	1.2	4,480	14.1	15,002	47.3	
Leitrim	2,970	505	17.0	20,038	4,835	24.8	587	3	510	2.6	84	0.4	2,840	14.5	10,670	54.6	
Limerick	16,049	2,524	15.7	104,861	27,400	26.8	2,696	2.6	1,420	1.4	726	0.7	14,971	14.6	55,099	53.9	
Longford	2,951	748	25.3	33,068	6,845	21.2	649	2	564	1.7	155	0.5	4,118	12.7	19,983	61.8	
Louth	13,405	1,509	11.3	62,218	18,531	30.5	1,526	2.5	1,798	3	599	1	4,098	6.8	34,141	56.3	
Mayo	11,190	1,611	14.4	59,129	16,078	28	1,736	3	1,345	2.3	324	0.6	9,072	15.8	28,938	50.3	
Meath	16,215	1,958	12.1	78,776	27,497	35.8	2,117	2.8	1,595	2.1	477	0.6	8,952	11.7	36,159	47.1	
Monaghan	6,237	703	11.3	26,597	6,748	26.1	155	0.6	269	1	97	0.4	6,317	24.4	12,296	47.5	
Offaly	6,264	760	12.1	32,464	8,143	25.7	1,097	3.5	522	1.6	94	0.3	4,875	15.4	16,963	53.5	
Roscommon	4,047	505	12.5	18,938	6,984	37.9	338	1.8	277	1.5	115	0.6	2,522	13.7	8,190	44.4	
Sligo	5,671	847	14.9	31,705	7,480	24.2	1,095	3.5	593	1.9	149	0.5	5,953	19.3	15,576	50.5	

Tipperary	14,404	1,701	11.8	67,013	18,067	27.7	1,413	2.2	1,043	1.6	409	0.6	4,959	7.6	39,394	60.3
Waterford	9,393	1,322	14.1	51,925	14,929	29.5	737	1.5	660	1.3	598	1.2	8,544	16.9	25,120	49.7
Westmeath	8,491	1,003	11.8	43,176	8,190	19.4	73	0.2	335	0.8	805	1.9	8,397	19.9	24,361	57.8
Wexford	13,134	2,123	16.2	85,840	20,631	24.6	1,170	1.4	1,543	1.8	633	0.8	11,920	14.2	47,800	57.1
Wicklow	12,931	1,772	13.7	72,314	20,259	28.7	2,342	3.3	1,866	2.6	635	0.9	10,207	14.5	35,211	49.9
State	380,277	50,534	13.3	2,030,798	555,881		50,504		43,480		16,536		295,605		1,017,614	

4.3.4 Post-Primary SAR reports by Class Year

Table 4.4 Summary of reasons for student absences from post-primary schools by class year, 2023–24 [\(return to text\)](#)

Class year	Total students			Total days lost												
	In responding schools	Who lost 20-plus days		Total <i>n</i>	Illness		Urgent		Holiday		Suspended		Other		Unexplained	
		<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
First year	68,354	9,433	13.8	346,091	109,332	31.6	9,730	2.8	8,304	2.4	3,436	1	49,050	14.2	166,239	48
Second year	69,203	13,590	19.6	534,610	161,364	30.2	12,903	2.4	13,046	2.4	5,654	1.1	72,568	13.6	269,075	50.3
Third year	68,631	14,179	20.7	585,776	161,983	27.7	13,316	2.3	10,944	1.9	5,261	0.9	81,813	14	312,459	53.3
Fourth year	53,638	8,025	15.0	283,110	72,306	25.5	9,764	3.4	7,575	2.7	837	0.3	60,555	21.4	132,073	46.7
Fifth year	63,858	3,337	5.2	137,918	34,194	24.8	3,098	2.2	2,757	2	819	0.6	18,076	13.1	78,974	57.3
Sixth year	56,156	1,420	2.5	58,694	12,586	21.4	1,418	2.4	648	1.1	120	0.2	9,580	16.3	34,342	58.5
Other		749		35,884	4,810	13.4	312	0.9	229	0.6	398	1.1	4,365	12.2	25,770	71.8
Total	379,840	50,733	13.4	1,982,083	556,575		50,541		43,503		16,525		296,007		1,018,932	

